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ABSTRACT

American sport stresses the outward aspects of participation such as outcomes, rewards, goals, and winning; Eastern thought and movement forms emphasize the inner and spiritual aspects of human movement such as self-realization, spontaneity, body awareness, and enlightenment. In relating Eastern thought and movement forms to Western sport, five themes are found to be repeated in the literature: (1) practical and utilitarian concerns; (2) hidden dimensions; (3) metaphysical (mind/body) concerns; (4) competition concerns; and (5) pedagogical concerns. A discussion and analysis of these concerns' implications for Western sport is presented. Two emerging trends are identified. The first is the "movement arts" trend which emphasizes the depth and fullness of human movement experiences and a subjective/qualitative understanding of the body in meaningful relation with the world. The second trend suggests that movement activities which emphasize self-awareness and self-expression will play an important role in coping with a high technology future. (JD)

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"EASTERN THOUGHT AND MOVEMENT FORMS: POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR WESTERN SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION"

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Trying to relate Eastern thought and movement forms to Western sport is a challenging task. Some people would say that it is impossible since Eastern thought, Eastern movement forms and Western sport are not compatible philosophically. They would argue that the "win at all costs" attitude which permeates much of American sport stresses the outward aspects of participation such as outcomes, rewards, goals, and winning; whereas Eastern thought and movement forms emphasize the inner and spiritual aspects of human movement such as self-realization, spontaneity, body awareness and enlightenment.

In recent years, a number of authors have suggested that Eastern thought is indeed compatible with Western sport. According to Murphy (1978), Leonard (1975), Smith (1975), and Kleinman (1977), Eastern thought and movement forms have a great deal to offer Western sport. They point out that the benefits range from a better understanding and awareness of the body to offering an alternative philosophical basis for participation in Western sport.

In my search for the possible implications that Eastern thought and movement forms have for Western sport, I came across five themes that seemed to be repeated time and again in the literature. For the sake of convenience, I have listed the possible implications under five headings which include the following: practical and utilitarian concerns; hidden dimensions; metaphysical (mind/body) concerns; competition concerns; and, pedagogical concerns. In the remainder of this paper, I'll briefly discuss each of the five possible implications.

Practical and Utilitarian Concerns

Several articles have been written about the effects that Eastern movement forms and techniques have had on improving the quality and quantity of performance in Western sports. The authors of these articles have mentioned that through practicing yoga, meditation, and/or the martial arts, one can improve fitness levels, body control, concentration, flexibility, mental alertness, and relaxation. Tohei (1962), for example, notes in his book, Aikido In Daily Life, that "aikido has attracted athletes of all persuasions who have found it a method for improving their coordination, reflexes, timing, and general physical well-being" (p. 26).

Several studies have been conducted which tend to substantiate, in a Western empirical sense, the improved performance claims. Studies completed by Routt (1973), Farrow (1975), Orme-Johnson (1973), Shaw (1974), and Pyecha (1970) have shown significant improvements in speed, agility, reaction time, endurance, perception, concentration, and self-confidence among individuals who practice Eastern movement forms and/or meditation techniques.

During the past decade, several amateur and professional sport teams have incorporated various Eastern movement forms and meditation techniques into their training programs. The Philadelphia Phillies and Detroit Tigers are two professional baseball teams which have received considerable publicity concerning their use of meditation techniques. According to Steve Carlton, a pitcher for Philadelphia, "when people ask me about my meditation program, I just tell them that it's helping me make myself a better person, and that I just feel real good about it. Once stresses are gone from the nervous system, everything just goes better" (Leopold, 1975: p. 3).

Hidden Dimensions

A second implication that Eastern thought and movement forms seem to offer Western sport is the opportunity to dispell the notion that the only way one can experience such things as "flow" or "peak experiences" in sport is by accident. Practitioners of Eastern movement forms have shown that these altered states of consciousness or "hidden dimensions", as George Leonard (1975) calls them, can be intentionally pursued through various movement, meditation, breathing, and centering techniques In aikido, for example,

> Centering, in the physical dimension, involves developing a sturdy base of support that is dynamic. Aikido training draws one's energies, ki, to the center of gravity, which is located in the abdominal region (called the hara). . . Centering in the mental dimension employs the Zen doctrine of "no-mind". To be effective, aikido training involves developing a state of consciousness that is fully aware and alert, undistracted and responsive. Thus centering means emptying or clearing the mind to bring it in touch with the immediate action. This no-mind state of consciousness enhances one's awarenesses and perceptions (Brimner, 1975, p. 21).

With the assistance of Eastern thought and movement forms, it is possible for Western athletes to experience a sense of total absorption and awareness more frequently. Instead of viewing "peak experiences" as mystical or psychic, Western athletes can finally realize that such occurrences are

an important part of the athletic experience.

In terms of athletic performance levels, Leonard (1975) states that,

> Athletes can be given back their feelings and humanity at no long-term cost to performance. In fact, the inculcation of higher awareness may well result in breakthroughs in performance levels (p. 19).

Metaphysical (Mind/Body) Concerns

The third area where Eastern thought and movement forms have possible implications for Western sport is related to mind/body concerns. Traditionally, Western sport has been grounded in a dualistic or atomistic model of human nature which has influenced Western thought for centuries. This view, characteristic of Plato and classical Greek scholars, is the view from which the "sound mind in a sound body" notion has developed. Within this philosophical orientation, sport and exercise are considered important because they contribute to a bodily state in which the mind can most fully develop and function (Siedentop, 1980).

Combining these dualistic traditions with a scientific obsession and educational concepts borrowed from the 20th century progressive education movement, sport in the United States finds itself in a dilemma. On the one hand, we hear talk about Western sport being the epitome of holistic thought since it facilitates the combining of body, mind and spirit through human movement. On the other hand, the dominant force in Western sport seems to be a dualistic view of human movement based on the scientific method. The emphasis, for the most part, remains on the external and quantifable aspects of movement. The human body is oftentimes viewed as an object to

be manipulated and measured through scientific means.

Eastern thought not only preaches a holistic or non-dualistic view of human movement, it is practiced in each of the Eastern movement forms. Within these Eastern forms, human movement is regarded as a display of creativity which emanates from the intuitive mode. It involves internalizing the technique and stilling the mind so that movement flows forth without hesitation or conscious deliberation. This total immersion in the immediate experience is reflected in the following quotation:

> Once the technical skill of (Zen) swordsmanship is acquired, the swordsman must lose his self-consciousness. The self is displayed in the desire to do well or to excel others. Self-consciousness fixes the mind or creates anxiety that interferes with the true display of one's proficiency. Being free from the obtruding ego means to perform the movements as if nothing special were taking place. There is no good or bad, no right or wrong. Rather, an event is taking place in which the swordsman is so totally immersed that there is no self doing it. The perfect swordsman wields his sword as if it wielded itself (Brunner, 1975: 17-18).

Frager (1972) describes three levels in which body-mind unification takes place in aikido. First, there is the level of one's own "ki" where internal energy is unified through concentration, relaxation, and centering. Second, there is the level where one learns to harmonize his/her awareness with the mental and physical set of another person. Finally, there is the level of unifying in a spiritual sense or becoming in tune with universal energy. These three levels form the essence of aikido which means "way of

harmonizing with the spirit of the universe" (Lande, 1977).

Although it is highly unlikely that dualistic notions will be eliminated completely from Western sport, it is very likely, however, that Eastern thought and movement forms will act as catalysts in bringing Western athletes back in touch with their bodies. Through example, albeit a "moving" example, Eastern movement forms are showing Western sport that union between body and mind is possible.

Competition Concerns

The forth possible implication relates to the rational Western mind which often views sports in terms of conflict (e.g., winning vs. losing, we vs. them). Excessive competition and a winning at all costs attitude is a fairly accurate description of American sport at higher competitive levels. Eastern thought, in turn, views opposites as being relational and fundamentally harmonious. According to Alan Watts (1957),

> "The Eastern mind views conflict as always comparatively superficial, for there can be no ultimate conflict when the pairs of opposites are mutually interdependent . . . In a universe whose fundamental principle is relativity rather than conflict there is no purpose because there is no victory to be won, no end to be attained. For every end, as the word itself shows is an extreme, an opposite, and exists only in relation to its other end" (p. 175).

Another example of an Eastern attitude toward competition was discussed by Sy Kleinman (1977) in his paper entitled: "Eastern Thought, Movement Forms and Western Sport." He referred to an incident involving Chinese table

tennis players at the 1977 world championships. After gaining the team titles with ease, the Chinese promptly (and somewhat predictably) lost the individual championships. Recent history suggests that when the Chinese win the team events they are content to let the individual titles go elsewhere. According to Kleinman (1977), the Chinese policy of "friendship first, competition second" obviously had something to do with the actions of the Chinese players.

For athletes who are turned off to the over emphasis placed on competition and winning in American sport, Eastern movement forms offer a viable alternative. The popularity of distance running, new game workshops, and inner game books reflects a need for less competitive sports and more movement activities that are process oriented which allow the participant to get in touch with his or her body. Eastern movement forms may help to fill this void. Moreover, by frequently comparing Eastern movement forms to Western sport, we can perhaps stimulate Western sport authorities to place competition back in proper perspective as an aid to achievement and a matter of good sportsmanship. "The short term excitement and intensity created by the overblown desire to win at all costs can be replaced by a more durable excitement and intensity springing from the heart of the athletic experience itself" (Leonard, 1975: 22).

Pedagogical Concerns

The fifth implication that Eastern thought and movement forms seem to offer Western sport is in the area of pedagogical concerns. The influence of Taoism and Zen on the learning of Western sport skills has been rather dramatic. The traditional Western approach to learning a skill has been to break the skill down into smaller parts based on mechanical principles.

Through appropriate feedback and reinforcement, the student progresses toward the total movement pattern only after repeating a number of sequentially arranged skills. Practice, demonstration, checkpoints, and progression principles have been used extensively in the teaching process. The teacher's role has been to tell and show the student what to do and when to make necessary adjustments. Furthermore, the body has been viewed as being able to learn things faster if told and shown what to do. Behavioral objectives and skill testing have been used to closely monitor various teaching and learning performance levels.

The Eastern approach to teaching and learning, on the other hand, is perhaps best exemplified in the following quotations:

> "In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired
> In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped
> Less and less is done
> Until non-action is achieved
> When nothing is done, nothing is left undone
> The world is ruled by letting things take their course
> It cannot be ruled by interfering." (Lao-Tzu, 1972: Ch.1)

> "The right art, cried the Master, is purposeless, aimless. The more obstinately you try to learn how to shoot the arrow for the sake of hitting the goal the less you will succeed in the one and the further the other will recede. What stands in your way is that you have a much too willful will. You think that what you do not do yourself does not happen.
> What must I do then, asks the pupil?

You must learn to wait properly.
And how does one learn that?
By letting go of yourself, leaving yourself and
everything of yours behind you so decisively that
nothing more is left of you but a purposeless tension."
(Herrigel, 1953:54)

The concepts expressed in the above quotations are also reflected in recent "inner game" approaches to Western sport. For example, Tim Gallwey (1974), author of The Inner Game of Tennis, tries to get his tennis students to take their conscious, critical selves off the front lines and let their inner selves take over. "You have to check the mind to preoccupy it, stop it from fretting. A quiet mind is the secret to Yoga tennis. Most people think concentration is fierce effort. Concentration is effortless effort, is not trying" (Gallwey, 1974: 56). Consequently, Gallwey's tennis clinics center around a self-discovery, instinctual, and intuitive approach to learning tennis. The "meaning" of the learning experience to the student is given top priority rather than just the finished product. Gallwey additionally places a lot of emphasis on body centering, energy flow, mental imaging, and meditative mind-clearing techniques.

Conclusions

It is difficult to predict when the five possible inplications mentioned in this paper might come to fruition. Two emerging trends seem to indicate that it may be sooner than we think. The first trend, which has theoritical orientations that are distantly connected to the humanistic education and human potential movements of the 1960's and 1970's, falls under the broad

heading of the "movement arts." Drawing heavily from existential philosophy and phenomenological methodology, the "movement arts", as a holistic approach, would emphasize the depth and fullness of human movement experiences and a subjective/qualative understanding of the body in meaningful relation with the world. It also stresses experiential reflection and description as well as self-awareness through total absorption in the movement experience. Obviously, Eastern movement forms which already possess these features would be an important part of the "movement arts" (Kleinman, 1976).

The second major trend is described in John Naisbitt's (1982) best-seller entitled, Megatrends. In this book the author refers to an interesting counterbalancing that is taking place in the United States between high tech (high technology) and high touch (i.e., a highly personal value system to compensate for the impersonal nature of technology). Naisbitt suggests that movement activities such as the martial arts, which emphasize self-awareness and self-expression, will play an important role in the future as we try to cope with high technology and maintain the delicate balance between high tech and high touch.

In any event, the future certainly looks bright and exciting for Eastern thought and movement forms in Western society.

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